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AT HOME AND ABROAD

The Soviets' Peace for Whom?

By Raymond Lawrence

The Soviet Union's reduction of 300,000 men in its armed forces is a phony—in the sense that it is not a serious token of its willingness to disarm for peace.

This is the third reduction in less than three years. And none of them signify what they appear to mean on the surface.

In the first place, these reductions in manpower do not alter the real balance of military power. There is no evidence, according to the highest military authorities, that the cuts were actually carried out. Russia has never agreed to any check on such matters, despite numerous Western proposals.

Even if such cuts were made, as were announced in 1955, in 1956 and now, the Soviet Union would still remain the predominant power in conventional forces. They have between 3 and 4 million men under arms. The Soviet bloc totals some 8½ million.

THE GAP OF SPACE

U.S. forces total about 2,750,000 men. By next June the number will be down to 2,600,000.

In the second place, the Soviet suggestion of withdrawal of its forces from such areas as East Germany or Czechoslovakia or Poland also is meaningless in terms of the balance of power.

Consider the geographical positions of the two great powers.

The Soviet Union could take all of its troops out of these Western outposts and still be able to put them back in battle

positions within 24 hours.

If the United States did the same thing, it would take weeks to replace the removed forces.

The situation simply is not comparable.

THE NATO THREAT

Thus the whole notion of disengaging Soviet and Western forces from focal areas is absurd and dangerous. "Disengagement" is an illusion concocted by clever propagandists in the Kremlin who hope to sell it to gullible liberals in Western Europe.

Look at the NATO alignment. North of the Italian border NATO has only about 13 divisions. Russia has more than 200 divisions in Europe—22 divisions in Eastern Germany alone.

Soviet talk about the dangers from NATO aggression is a pure myth.

There, however, are other considerations.

More than two years ago Alan Dulles, director of CIA, warned that the Soviet Union was engineering a dramatic and revolutionary reorganization of its armed forces.

Inauguration of new weapons was to replace conventional manpower. Men, of course, are still needed to operate sensational push-button devices but not in the numbers to which we have become accustomed in the past.

UNREAL CHALLENGE

Thus the number of men in service is no longer an indication of military strength. It is an obsolete index.

No one who understands the novel relationship between

men and machines in the military field today will believe the challenge that Moscow issued in connection with the current reductions. The challenge is simply unrealistic.

Furthermore, the Soviet Union for some time has suffered from a shortage of manpower in the internal economy.

Khrushchev himself has admitted that more men are needed in the factories and on the farms.

The current release from the armed services fits in with this need. Hydrogen bombs and long-range missiles have made such a saving of manpower possible.

SUMMIT MEETING

There is still another consideration relating to diplomacy.

In Europe today, especially in West Germany, France and Britain, there is a strong movement for another summit meeting.

Moscow obviously hopes that peaceful gestures—and note the emphasis on this in the communique—like the reductions in manpower will encourage those forces that want another conference like the futile Geneva meeting of some two years ago.

Prime Minister Macmillan's proposal for a non-aggression pact, which merely repeats Eulganin's suggestion two years ago in a letter to President Eisenhower, helps along the Moscow strategy.

The whole Soviet design is clear enough if we read the words correctly. It's to weaken the West and strengthen the U.S.S.R. under the guise of peace. Peace for whom?